

Value of Temperance Education in the Schools Today in the United States



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BECAUSE I was unwilling to rely upon my own opinions regarding the value of temperance instruction, I went to the authorities of the land; first, to the physicians, scientists and health-workers, for facts as to the effects of alcohol; then to the trainers of youth to learn from those who have been teaching the subject for ten, twenty or thirty years what is its value and how they believe it should be continued now that the Prohibition Amendment has been in effect eight years.

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AS ATHLETES OF 1923 SEE IT

Asked regarding training rules for athletes, Major John L. Griffith, Commissioner of Athletics in the "Big Ten" Intercollegiate Conference, wrote me:

"Something like a half million boys are playing football in the schools and colleges this fall, and perhaps three million more

*From an address by Miss Williams to the National Convention of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Boston, Mass., Nov. 16, 1928.

will play basketball this winter. I do not know of a single coach or trainer in an educational institution who believes that alcohol is beneficial to an athlete. In fact, it is safe to say that all of our school and college coaches insist that their boys and young men shall abstain entirely from the use of alcohol in any form.

"From my personal experience and observation, our athletes know full well that they cannot expect to succeed in athletics if they break training during the training season. By breaking training they understand that this means smoking, drinking alcoholic beverages, eating between meals, or eating the foods that do not agree with them.

"I am convinced that if our young men learn that they must be temperate in their habits if they are to succeed in athletics, the value of temperate living will be impressed upon them after their active athletic days are ended."

William J. Bingham, Director of Athletics at Harvard, answered my inquiry as follows:

"Naturally alcohol is not permitted during training season for any of our teams. An athletic coach has a great deal of responsibility in molding the characters of young men, because I do not know of any association that is closer than that between a coach and a boy."

At the University of Washington, Al Ulbrickson, head coach of the university crews, says:

"To stand the strain of a gruelling three or four mile race, every man must be in perfect physical condition. Each must pull his own oar. The use of alcohol is detrimental to perfect coordination of mind and

muscle, and it never will be tolerated on my squad."

Alcohol in any form is absolutely prohibited to the players at the University of Notre Dame, either in or out of football season. This is done, says Knute Rockne, the school's director of athletics,

"by appealing to the player's loyalty, his interest in the success of the team, and his honor in doing anything that might in any way interfere with his efficiency as a player."

Coach Rockne says further:

"I believe that we in the colleges have a responsibility as regards character and there can be no really strong character without developing will-power to be temperate at all times."

Coach Fielding H. Yost, Director of Athletics at the University of Michigan, himself a lifelong total abstainer, says:

"During the past thirty years I have been connected, as player and coach, with college athletics. I know the evil effects of alcohol on the moral and physical life of one who uses it. I have never observed any good from the use of it. I would not waste time trying to train or develop one who uses it. A boy or young man who drinks does not give himself a fair chance."

Testifying in April, 1926, before the Senate Committee at the hearings on the proposed modification of the Volstead Act, Amos Alonzo Stagg, football coach at the University of Chicago for the past thirty-five years, said:

"As a coach I do not believe, and none of the coaches that train men believe in the use of alcoholic beverages. I was a member of the coaching staff of the Olympic teams

two years ago, and that was one of the forbidden things when we went over to Paris; the men were not to drink anything but water, and we took our water with us. . . . The coaches and trainers generally are dead against the use of alcoholic liquors, even beer, in training. . . . Now, the American athletes stood upon the top. There were none better. The only ones that approximated us were the Finnish athletes, and they do not use liquor."

Incidentally, Coach Stagg is one of those who believe that there is much less drinking among college students, and young people in general—in the Middle West, at least—than there was before prohibition.

HOW IT MAY BE DONE

Practically any subject offers opportunities for temperance education, it would seem from the replies I have had to my questionnaire. For instance, essay contests may be entered by English classes. Art students may work out temperance posters; history classes may find a warning against intemperance from examples of the past; mathematics classes may study statistics of accidents and make graphs showing the decreased death rate since prohibition; sociology and economics students are offered a wide range of material in poverty, illiteracy, crime and disease as the result of intemperance; community civics classes may be taught that respect for law means respect for the Eighteenth Amendment; classes in either home economics, physical education or hygiene offer an opportunity for the discussion of those drinks

which are enemies of good health. This study takes up the stimulants, such as tea, coffee and Coca-Cola, which should not be used by children because of their caffeine content, and points out that, in the opinion of the majority of modern scientists, alcohol is not even a stimulant, but a narcotic which deadens the senses and lowers both physical and mental efficiency.

PROHIBITION A BEGINNING

Prohibition is only the beginning in the direction of abolition of the liquor traffic and the ultimate freedom of human beings from the ills traceable to the use of alcohol. A people cannot be reformed through legislation; rather, it is education that offers the most effective remedy for popular evils.

Irving Fisher, Yale economist, who had recommended prohibition as a temporary, war-time measure, believes that "constitutional prohibition came on the country prematurely." As to the solution of the problem he asserts that we should "do now the educating after prohibition which, by rights, should have been done before prohibition."

P. P. Claxton, Superintendent of Schools at Tulsa, Okla., and former United States Commissioner of Education, believes that much of the present reaction against prohibition is due to the fact that temperance education was not always scientific, but too often was of an emotional and propaganda type. In his opinion, men and women, who voted for prohibition largely as a result of this

teaching, lacked the scientific basis that might have enabled them to stand against the present propaganda and emotional reaction which, he says, is largely commercial in its sources. Soon after adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment Dr. Claxton said:

"The fight for temperance, sobriety, clean and healthy living is not yet fully won. In fact, it never will be finally won. It can only be won for a single generation at a time, or even for a few years at a time. It is, therefore, necessary that the teaching of health and of things pertaining thereto should be continued in our schools and emphasized more than it has been in the past."

WHENCE COMES DISRESPECT FOR LAW

The tendency among certain classes to disobey the law has deprived this country of full benefits from prohibition. The results have been especially undesirable among young people, for while majority opinion seems to hold that the number of youthful drinkers has diminished, disrespect for law is on the increase. But what other effect could be expected from such influences as "wet" editorials appearing in newspapers controlled by the liquor forces; from the moving picture scenes depicting drinking; from the example of the alumnus who carries liquor back to his college functions; or from the mothers and fathers who patronize the bootlegger?

EDUCATION MORE NECESSARY NOW

Because of the disrespect for law in homes where drinking is common today,

many people have come to the conclusion that temperance education is more necessary now than formerly. Walter E. Ranger, Commissioner of Education in Rhode Island, writes me:

"This type of instruction is even more necessary under conditions in which alcoholic beverages are manufactured and consumed in the home than when practically their use was relegated to the saloon."

I want also to quote R. L. Jones, Superintendent of Schools at Memphis, Tenn., who says:

"There will always be liquor sellers as long as there are liquor buyers. The only way to effect a permanent cure is to destroy the desire to buy, and this can be done only by education."

SOBER NATION MORE NECESSARY NOW

The speeding up of life due to the airplane, mechanized age in which we live makes temperance more necessary than formerly. In such an era, when clear heads and steady hands are required to hold one's own, do not the young people need more than ever to be warned of the evils of alcohol? I believe they do. The automobile has added to the dangers of intemperance, and it is not improbable that the airplane will do likewise. Superintendent Percival S. Barnes of East Hartford, Conn., advocates special stress on this point in all temperance education. He says:

"I should certainly emphasize the need for the development of an absolutely sober nation in a time when nearly all of our people over sixteen are driving automobiles. If

there were no other arguments for prohibition I should rest the case upon what seems to me even sufficient foundation, namely, to insure greater safety on the highways for the millions of people who are using them in high-powered cars."

Increased leisure is adding to the problems of sane living. We are approaching a shorter week and a shorter day for working people everywhere. The five-day week plan is offering leisure time which involves an enormous social problem. People must be educated for that leisure.

THE IDLE ARE THE DRINKERS

Even now it is the idle who are our most heavy drinkers. F. D. Boynton, Superintendent of Schools at Ithaca, New York, and President of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association, says:

"Common intoxication is not in style as it used to be. When the idle well-to-do get interesting jobs, drinking will be still less in style. There are approximately 14,000,000 children now in our schools who would not know what ailed a man who was under the influence of drink should they happen to see one."

IN THE PAST

Throughout the struggle for reform in the drinking habits of the country, the National Education Association has been active in behalf of both temperance and law enforcement. Beginning in 1863, when the organization was only six years old, the association has passed resolutions time after time urging law enforce-

ment. At the meeting in 1875 Frances E. Willard was a speaker on "The Relation of the Teacher to the Reforms of the Day." Temperance education in the schools was endorsed in 1880 and again four years later. In 1885 the association "approved the effort to create a strong public sentiment in favor of temperance" and endorsed "all proper individual and legislative action looking toward the healthfulness, happiness and purity of the people." A study of the teaching of physiology, especially with regard to the effects of alcohol, was recommended in 1894 by the National Education Association, and six years later by its Department of Superintendence. State prohibition was reindorsed in 1892. In 1918 ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment was recommended by the Association, and in 1920 it went on record as favoring "impartial and fearless enforcement of the Volstead Act."

EDUCATORS AND THE FUTURE

Since that time resolutions in support of law enforcement have been adopted almost every year by both the National Education Association and the Department of Superintendence. The resolution adopted at Dallas, Texas, in March, 1927, by the latter department, leaves no room for doubt that the majority of school authorities of this country are whole-hearted believers in temperance, law enforcement and continued education as to the injurious effects of alcohol as a beverage. I quote this resolution in full:

"Finally we recommend and urge that a worthwhile health program be carried on throughout the country, emphasizing in particular personal hygiene and the evil effects of narcotics and alcoholic beverages; that character building be recognized as a fundamental objective in all parts of the school program to the end that the youth of the land shall be strengthened in all moral and spiritual values; that respect for law and order and a sense of personal civic responsibility be encouraged in all schools; and that a happy and helpful attitude of tolerance be inculcated to the end that American youth shall be imbued with the spirit of world-wide brotherhood, peace and progress."

I shall quote also the resolution on this subject adopted at Seattle in July, 1927, by the National Education Association:

"We recommend that the program of physical and health education already provided in many centers be extended to all of the schools of the nation. In the development of this program we urge that re-emphasis be given to the teaching of the evil effects of narcotic drugs and of alcoholic beverages."

The teachers of the country are accepting their responsibility to prepare the children of today so that they may with intelligence and understanding oppose the liquor traffic when the present temperance workers shall pass on this task to them. Because the new generation will not know from personal experience the evils which caused their parents to outlaw the liquor traffic, the schools must not only teach children the effects of alcohol, but must show how these effects made prohibition necessary.

The teachers follow the direction of the secretary of our association, J. W. Crabtree, who says:

"The teachers of the nation of a few decades ago are entitled to a large share of the credit for the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. They taught the injurious effects of narcotics and stimulants and prepared a generation to stand against the existence of the saloon. This teaching must be continued. If the evil effects of the saloon are not taught and the other side continues to be held up in the press, we may easily develop in a few years a generation which will undo that which required fifty years and more to achieve."

As Superintendent M. E. Moore, of Beaumont, Texas, expresses it, the schools have "*raised a generation to vote the law (prohibition); we must now raise a generation to enforce it.*"

The fact is that it takes time to bring about reasonable enforcement of any new law. At Washington's death there was great doubt that the American Constitution would ever become a working reality, despite the fact that it was then twelve years old. Today we hear on every hand praises of the foresight of those who framed this document. The prohibition law has been made a part of that Constitution, and I believe through education that amendment will eventually share in the reverence which attaches to the original document.